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SINGAPORE-USSR: Lee Kuan Yew is trying to pressure
Australia on defense arrangements.

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SINGAPORE-USSR: PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW ADMITS THAT HIS INTEREST IN OPENING SINGAPORE FACILITIES TO SOVIET NAVAL AS WELL AS MERCHANT SHIPS IS INTENDED IN PART TO PRESSURE AUSTRALIA ON DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS.

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[REDACTED] LEE ASSERTED TO A US OFFICIAL THIS WEEK THAT HE IS USING THE POSSIBILITY OF A SOVIET PRESENCE ON THE ISLAND TO FRIGHTEN THE AUSTRALIANS INTO A WHOLEHEARTED PARTICIPATION IN THE NASCENT FIVE-POWER DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT, WHICH INVOLVES SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA, UK, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IF THE AUSTRALIANS MAKE WHAT HE CONSIDERS A FIRM COMMITMENT TO REGIONAL SECURITY, THERE WOULD BE "NO SOVIETS IN SINGAPORE."

SINGAPORE, LIKE KUALA LUMPUR, HAS CONTINUING RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE FIRMLINESS OF AUSTRALIAN PLANS TO PARTICIPATE WHOLEHEARTEDLY IN THE FIVE-POWER DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT AFTER THE BRITISH LEAVE NEXT YEAR. IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL THAT AUSTRALIA WOULD YIELD TO THIS SORT OF PRESSURE AND MAKE ANY SUBSTANTIAL ALTERATION IN ITS PRESENT LIMITED "FORWARD DEFENSE" POLICY.

DURING THE DISCUSSION LEE TOOK CARE TO MENTION OBLIQUELY HIS DESIRE FOR A CONTINUING US ROLE IN THE AREA. HE ALSO NOTED THAT EVEN IF THE SOVIETS MAKE USE OF SINGAPORE PORTS, HE HAS IN MIND ONLY "CASUAL" VISITS BY SOVIET NAVAL VESSELS AND THAT HE HAS NO IDEA OF LETTING THEM USE THE FORMER BRITISH NAVAL BASE AT SEMBAWANG. ANY ARRANGEMENTS, WHICH WOULD INVOLVE ONLY MINOR SERVICING, WOULD BE CARRIED OUT AT ONE OF SINGAPORE'S TWO COMMERCIAL SHIPYARDS. IN ANY CASE, LEE DID SAY THE SOVIETS HAD AGREED TO SEND A TEAM TO SINGAPORE TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT.

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